

City Talk



POTSHOT

Nothing odd pops into the mind of a woman as she ambles past a huge bubble that seems to drift through a park in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. That's because she's been seeing through this playful inflation for a while, which makes you realize it's not what it seems. In fact, it's a promo in plastic created and suspended from a tree by a street artist doing business nearby. He deserves some commissions for original thinking. PHOTO: AFP

Paving the way for future generations

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Simon Lee



Despite its scenic beauty, upper Austria is not a popular tourist destination. On the contrary, it is an industrial region accounting for nearly one-fourth of the nation's exports.

Since 2015, the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria has organized the Austrian Leadership Programs as a network building event for participants from across the globe.

I am honored to be invited to join the fifth round of the program, visiting not only the nation's capital, Vienna, but also the capital of the state of Upper Austria, Linz.

Prior to taking part in the Austrian Leadership program, I was already a big fan of Austrian School of Economics, and was fascinated by the philosophical work by great Austrian thinkers of the early 20th century.

I must, however, confess I have the perception that Austrians are living in the shadow of their own past. In fact, many aspects of Austrian society and economy are relatively conservative, which, on the bright side, provides stability and predictability.

Having said that, Austrians have their own way of interpreting the future.

At Electronica, a cutting-edge institution based in Linz, is a case in point.

The Austrians are bringing together the disciplines of art, technology and society for new ideas to revolutionize the way humans interact with concepts, and the environment.

It is where you see how Karl Popper's three worlds interact, and where the future lies.



Arts Electronics in Linz, Austria, focuses on the interconnection between art, technology and society. www.electronica.at

As a father, I often ask myself where the world is heading, what kind of society and economy will my kids live in and how I can help them to get prepared.

After meditating on the issues, I conclude that no one can tell how the future will unfold, yet there are a few things we can do.

A friend who knows care about education and the well-being of future generations recently shared with me an information pamphlet for a summer program, Inspire, by Arch Education, which encompasses subjects in science, technology, engineering, math, humanity, as well as discussions on social issues.

Such a multidisciplinary approach is not only how world-class institutions explore the application of technology, but also a way for preparing our future generations for their world.

It perhaps not possible for everyone of us to send our kids overseas, but there are always opportunities closer at home.

Simon Lee is a business consultant www.facebook.com/lesimonhk

King of premiums banks on iron will



FAME AND FORTUNE

Siu Sai-wo

After reporting its results, HSBC suddenly announced the appointment of AIA chief executive Mark Tucker to succeed chairman Douglas Flint.

Meanwhile, Ng Keng-hoo, who has been working with Tucker for close to two decades, has been appointed as Tucker's successor.

There have been reports about top-level changes at the bank before the announcement. And the rally of HSBC shares probably reflects the positive market perception of the appointment.

In joining HSBC, Tucker is said to be taking a pay cut. But the size of HSBC's assets far exceed those of AIA.

Tucker talked about his career in an interview with *The Standard* years ago. His top consideration in choosing a job was not money, but whether it would motivate him and fire his enthusiasm.

Remuneration at financial institutions is usually tied to performance. Joining at a time when the bank's share price is at a historic low could turn out to be rewarding for Tucker if he performs well.

Tucker was AIA's spokesman before it went public. The group used to be the Asian flagship of the AIG group. Then the financial tsunami came, and AIG had to be rescued by the US government. Washington decided to pull out when the situ-

ation had calmed down a bit, and sold its entire stake in AIG, creating the conditions for AIA to be listed independently in Hong Kong.

In his seven years at the helm of AIA, Tucker boosted operations in the region, achieving rapid expansion in the mainland and other markets.

A former top HSBC manager doubted if Tucker is a good choice, as the nature of the banking business is different from that of an insurer.

But the basic principles of running a business are universal. And the most crucial quality in a top person is a sense of direction. Actual implementation of specific policies can always be entrusted to the huge machinery of the enterprise.

And a top-level source at AIA said Tucker is an "Iron Man" who is full of energy and always flying around to take care of business.

But shareholders are, of course, most interested in finding out whether his appointment is a signal that the bank is shifting its global outlook back to a focus on Asia.

Siu Sai-wo is publisher of *Sing Tao Daily*



Mark Tucker took AIA into new markets. [COMET.HK](http://www.comet.hk)

Cultural SPECTRUM

Marie Julien

With urbanization gaining pace and air pollution clouding the view in major cities, contemplating the stars in a pitch-black sky is fast becoming a rarity that operators are banking on as a new selling-point.

From a total solar eclipse to the Milky Way to the Northern Lights, many experts at Berlin's ITB, marketed as the world's leading travel trade show, were making the case for astronomical experiences this year.

"Astro-tourism is really an increasing business," said Andreas Haesel, director of the planetarium museum in northwestern Germany's Osnabrueck.

"We now see a lot of travel agencies which offer this kind of tourism."

While space tourism may be the holy grail for the most committed of stargazers, its astronomical price tag puts it out of reach for most, not to mention health and safety concerns over flyers beyond the atmosphere.

Astro-tourism allows enthusiasts

of celestial movements to experience the natural phenomena with both feet firmly on planet Earth.

With few places sufficiently dark for observations, some European and US national parks have now classed certain areas as "dark sky preserves."

Deserts in Namibia, Botswana and Iran are marketed as ideal stargazing sites that also offer the exoticism of sunny dunes.

Keyvan Lanarkani, European representative of an Iranian tour firm, said

shower or the Northern Lights. Known commonly as the Northern Lights, the Aurora Borealis has become a selling point for Arctic Circle tours.

There has been increasing interest over the past four years, said Ellen Kachel of the Northern Norway Tourist Board, noting that demand lies grown, in particular, among Asian clients.

The northern Norwegian city of Tromso has been visitor numbers explode, and every photon shared on social networks fuels further interest.

But this year, a big astro-tourism seller is the August 21 total eclipse of the sun, which will be visible only along a stretch running from Oregon to South Carolina, cutting diagonally across the United States.

In Idaho, the tourism sector is already in full gear to welcome an influx.

"We are almost sold out," said Nancy Richardson of Idaho Tourism. "We've been selling the solar eclipse for two years already."

Illustrating how magical such experiences can be, she said a tourist from a polluted Chinese city who toured up when he saw the Milky Way from Idaho's mountains the first time.

After all, for the most, stargazers are already a thing of the past. [AGENCCFRANCE-PRESS](http://www.agenccfrance-press.com)



The sector started developing in his country due to domestic demand.

"It really started because of the vast central desert," he said. "We have pretty big spaces of darkness."

But he noted just searching for familiar favorites like Orion's belt or the Big Dipper, Haesel says recent years have seen a boom in "sevent astro-tourism" — travel to witness an eclipse, a meteor